



# Midtown GREENWAY

The Midtown Greenway is the “missing link” in the century-old concept of connecting the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes to the Mississippi River.

The greenway is converting the former railroad corridor extending across 29th Street into a public open space with recreational trails and space for future transit purposes, while serving as a catalyst for economic development and neighborhood revitalization.

The Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority purchased the railroad property in 1993, with the vision of combining future transit development with bicycle and pedestrian trails moving east and west across South Minneapolis. This link also provides bicycle and pedestrian users dedicated access from the Mississippi River all the way to Carver County.

The Midtown Greenway is one of the first major projects of Hennepin Community Works – an employment, public works and tax-base development program initiated by the county. Hennepin Community Works is based on the premise that carefully designed and integrated parks and public works projects enhance the long-term tax base and viability of neighborhoods while improving the quality of life for residents.

Hennepin County is the project’s lead implementation agency and its largest financial supporter. **The project is a joint venture of the county, the county railroad authority, the State of Minnesota and the City of Minneapolis, with input from neighborhood individuals and groups.**

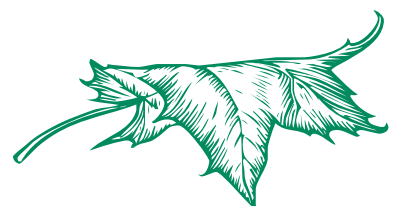
In addition to Hennepin and its railroad authority, the greenway has received financial assistance from the federal government, the state, the Metropolitan Council, the City of Minneapolis and surrounding neighborhoods through the Neighborhood Revitalization Program. The county is responsible for construction, while the city is

responsible for the operation and maintenance of the bike and pedestrian trails, including trail safety.

A public planning process involving the county, city and 14 neighborhoods along the corridor led to a master plan for development of bicycle and pedestrian trails along the northern half of the railroad right-of-way, with the southern half reserved for future transit.



Recreational trails,  
neighborhood  
revitalization,  
future transit



# A grand vision becomes reality

In the late 1800s, Minneapolis civic leaders envisioned a connection between the city's Chain of Lakes and the Mississippi River via a grand boulevard parallel to Lake Street.

The Minnesota Legislature authorized a city referendum on the establishment of an independent parks commission, and Minneapolis citizens overwhelmingly approved it in 1883. With the rapid growth of the city, the commission decided that steps should be taken to secure the necessary land for a "grand system of parks and boulevards."

Land was purchased for parks that have become the city's

hallmark, but the great east-west boulevard in the heart of the city never materialized. Instead, 29th Street – one block north of Lake Street – became a bustling railroad corridor, connecting South Minneapolis to regional commerce. The largest commercial center in the corridor was the giant Sears Roebuck building at Lake Street and Chicago Avenue.

Today, the former rail corridor is the Midtown Greenway, which features smooth, paved pedestrian and bicycle trails that wind through nearly half of the neighborhoods in Minneapolis, including historic areas of the city not accessible by car.



## Greenway development stages

As of fall 2006, the first three construction phases of the project are complete.

### » Phase one

of the Midtown Greenway extends from France Avenue on the west, between Lake Calhoun and Lake of the Isles, to Fifth Avenue. This portion of the project was completed

in 2001, with the multi-purpose pathway open from the Chain of Lakes to Fifth Avenue.

### » Phase two

– the central segment, from Fifth Avenue to Hiawatha Avenue – was designed with significant public input in 2001. Construction began in

2003 and pedestrian and bike trails opened in November 2004.

### » Phase three

– from Hiawatha Avenue to the Mississippi River was completed in fall 2006. Access ramps were built between 31st Avenue South and 34th Avenue South

at Anne Sullivan School, between 36th Avenue South and 39th Avenue South at Bracket Park, and at West River Parkway.

### » Phase four

– construction of a Midtown Greenway bridge over Hiawatha Avenue will begin in fall 2006.





# Neighborhood revitalization

A primary goal of this Hennepin Community Works project is to leverage private investment in area neighborhoods.

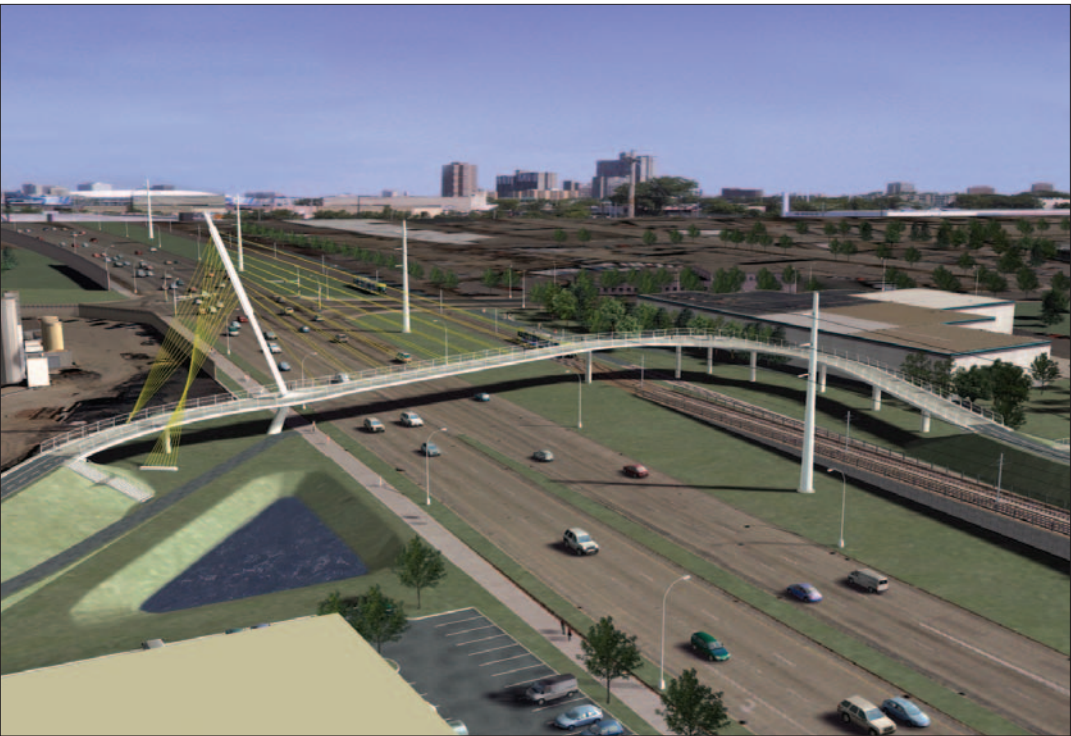
Recognizing the potential of the greenway, several residential and commercial projects have been initiated along the corridor. They include the Urban Village, a three-block, mixed-income housing development on the greenway's north side between Aldrich and Dupont avenues.

The largest project is the Midtown Exchange, the former Sears building at Chicago and Lake. Open in 2006, the Midtown Exchange has a variety of uses, including corporate headquarters for Allina Health Systems, apartments and condos, a hotel that



connects via skyway to Abbot Northwestern Hospital to the north, a “Global Marketplace” featuring ethnic businesses, and a county licensing service center.

**This is a unique, vibrant corridor that combines Lake Street and the Midtown Greenway, linking the diverse elements of life in the Twin Cities.”**  
– Hennepin County Commissioner Gail Dorfman



## Phase 4 bridge

An artist's rendering of the greenway bridge over Hiawatha Avenue – the fourth and final development phase of the Midtown Greenway. When completed, the greenway will stretch from France Avenue on the west to the Mississippi River.





# An urban recreational treasure

The Midtown Greenway is open to visitors 24 hours a day, year-round.

More than 1,000 bicyclists and 1,000 pedestrians use the greenway each day, and the number of visitors continues to increase.

In addition to connecting city parks and trail systems from the Chain of Lakes to the Mississippi, 5.5 miles to the east, the greenway is an

integral part of a larger system of regional bike trails from the western suburbs to St. Paul and beyond.

The Midtown Greenway is located in a former railroad trench for about half its length. This portion is under consideration for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places – the federal government’s official list of historic properties worthy of preservation. This segment

**“The vision of a connection between the Chain of Lakes and the Mississippi River is a century old. We are now, with the help of the Midtown Greenway Coalition, the Midtown Community Works Partnership and a broad array of governmental units, making that vision a reality.”**

– Peter McLaughlin, chair, Hennepin Regional Rail Authority



is the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad grade separation, the 2.8-mile-long transportation district formed by the depressed railroad trench. The trench – constructed between 1912 and 1916 – is about 22 feet deep and has a steeply sloped earthen wall on the north and south sides.

The Midtown Community Works Partnership, consisting of private corporations along the greenway, has helped fund annual Arbor Day plantings. The planting of nearly 4,000 trees, along with gardens and landscaping efforts, have transformed the once-overgrown, weedy trench into an aesthetically pleasing public space.

Participants in the Adopt-a-Greenway Program have donated time and materials to create beautiful plantings within the greenway. This program provides community groups, schools, businesses and individuals an opportunity to contribute to the beautification and maintenance of the Midtown Greenway by “adopting” a segment of the corridor and cleaning up that segment at least three times a year. It is a

collaborative effort of the rail authority, the community-based Midtown Greenway Coalition and the City of Minneapolis.

Ramps from street level allow easy access to bike and pedestrian trails in the greenway. Each north-south block over the 29th Street trench also features a bridge that was built about 1910. The old bridges are now being replaced with new ones.

Modern lighting and a security surveillance system have been installed for the safety of greenway visitors. Video cameras feed images to a nearby police department precinct headquarters, where images are monitored, and emergency call-in phones also have been installed. Additional safety features include fencing, retaining walls, and regular patrol of the corridor by squad cars and bicycle officers.

The county’s purchase of the Cepro grain elevators at 11th Avenue South in 2001 eliminated the last train traffic in the corridor west of Hiawatha Avenue.



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## For more information

Information about the Midtown Greenway project may be obtained by calling Hennepin Community Works at 612-348-9260, or visiting the project website: **[www.hennepin.us](http://www.hennepin.us)**  
keyword search: Midtown Greenway

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